

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2508, TFLE01: AOUN PARROTS PIAF: "JE NE REGRETTE RIEN"

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags [#cablegate](#) and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. [#06BEIRUT2508](#).

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BEIRUT2508	2006-08-01 12:34	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN	Embassy Beirut

Appears in these articles:

[not](#)
[yet](#)
[set](#)

VZCZCXRO6992
OO RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
DE RUEHLB #2508/01 2131234
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 011234Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4849
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002508

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2016
TAGS: [IS](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: TFLE01: AOUN PARROTS PIAF: "JE NE REGRETTE RIEN"

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (b).

SUMMARY

1. (C/NF) Former General Michel Aoun displayed a stubborn refusal to face the reality of Hizballah's renegade status in Lebanon. Far from holding Hassan Nasrallah accountable for the violence that began with Hizballah's attack on July 12, Aoun said that as long as the fighting continued, all of Lebanon must rally behind the force engaged with the Israelis. The FPM leader did offer general support for PM Siniora's 7-point approach to cease-fire negotiations, but then made the interesting claim that the most critical issues had already been addressed in his February 6 communique with Hassan Nasrallah. In an awkward attempt to straddle the fence, Aoun insisted he was not really in an alliance with Hizballah, but then proceeded to tear down the "inconstant" leaders of March 14 -- Siniora, Walid Jumblatt, Saad Hariri -- who in his view did not deserve the "confidence" of the Lebanese people. The implication (although never stated explicitly) was that Nasrallah is a more trustworthy partner. When specifically asked to explain the events of July 12, he confessed he simply did not understand how it had all happened. End summary.

A TALE OF TWO AUTHORS

2. (C/NF) In an August 1 meeting with the Ambassador and poloff, Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun tried to explain how he could have authored two very disparate articles that appeared within 24 hours of each other in the Wall Street Journal and the pro-Syrian newspaper As-Safir. Aoun said the strongly pro-Hizballah views expressed in As-Safir on July 30 and his balanced exposition of the causes of the present conflict in WSJ on July 31 were actually consistent with each other, if one understood his commitment as a Lebanese citizen.

3. (C/NF) He insisted that all Lebanese were now compelled to support those forces (Hizballah) that were confronting Israel. As a result, the former general maintained that he could dispassionately analyze the root cause of the conflict, while continuing to express his support for Hizballah. Given Israeli crimes, he simply had no other choice.

CONSEQUENCES FOR HIZBALLAH

4. (C/NF) When asked whether Nasrallah's cynical posing to his colleagues in the National Dialogue just days before the outbreak of hostilities warranted consequences, Aoun dodged the question. Instead of a simple answer, Aoun postulated the current hostilities didn't need to happen -- if Lebanon's political leaders had heeded the results of his earlier discussions with Hizballah (that produced the February 6 joint communique) and had come to grips with three basic issues, a common approach to the Government of Israel may have produced stabilizing results.

5. (C/NF) As he has on numerous occasions, Aoun referred to the communique's treatment of Shebaa Farms, prisoners in Israeli custody, and the weapons of Hizballah. He insisted that the underlying issues remain the same and implied that Siniora's 7-points are simply a reiteration of his earlier positions.

6. (C/NF) When the Ambassador persisted in whether he and his Free Patriotic Movement would confront Nasrallah's deliberate and unilateral decision to involve Lebanon in a painful war, Aoun merely said that once hostilities cease, he would put the "necessary" questions to Hizballah's leader. Aoun casually stated that "everyone has the right to ask questions," but then argued that while the fighting continued, all other considerations had to be aside.

¶17. (C/NF) Turning another inquiry on its head, Aoun said his "cooperative alliance" with Hizballah should be viewed in the same light as other politicians' interactions with the organization. After all, he pointed out, it was Siniora that invited Hizballah to be part of his Government, while FPM was kept in the political wilderness last June when the Cabinet

BEIRUT 00002508 002 OF 002

was formed. In a similar vein, Aoun emphasized that it was Saad Hariri who spent long hours in closed discussions with Hizballah's leader, while the results of his deliberations resulted in the public document of February 6. And finally, he recounted the on again/off again relationship of Druse leader Walid Jumblatt.

¶18. (C/NF) Aoun argued that at one time or another all the pro-reform March 14 leaders had sought to find common ground with Hassan Nasrallah, and yet he was the only politician who had paid a price. Aoun used this logic to conclude that March 14 leaders did not enjoy the "confidence" of the Lebanese people and this condition would handicap the Government's efforts to reach an equitable cease-fire. The Ambassador noted that, whatever flirtations Jumblatt and Hariri once engaged in with Nasrallah, at least they now saw clearly who Nasrallah was and what he represented. Aoun did not respond.

¶19. (C/NF) Despite his mistrust (and evident low regard) for the Siniora Government and its political allies, Michel Aoun did state that he supported the current effort in the UN Security Council to achieve a cease-fire. But he couldn't help getting in a final comment that the current situation could have been avoided if his policy suggestions had been considered by Siniora, Hariri, and Jumblatt, who are "all the same."

THE DAY AFTER

¶10. (C/NF) Aoun stated he hoped the divergent political forces in Lebanon could work together to rebuild a "broken country," but he repeated his conviction that he could not trust those whose leadership -- meaning the March 14 majority -- had not prevented the present "catastrophe." Michel Aoun maintained he has always sought the conditions that many Lebanese politicians now say they support: the return of prisoners, the return of Shebaa, and the "integration" of Hizballah's weapons into the LAF. In that regard, he stated, there was convergence between himself and the Government. But in closing, he once again expressed his concern that the Government was not really up to the task.

COMMENT

¶11. (C/NF) For those who hoped the tragedy of the current crisis might be the catalyst to inject some sanity in Michel Aoun's relationship with Hizballah, this meeting proved a disappointment. In what was essentially a disjointed, repetitive, and often contradictory performance, Aoun displayed the qualities that engender so much antipathy and distrust among Lebanon's political class. He rarely admits a mistake or miscalculation and through exquisite twists of logic, always manages to replay his diplomatic/political "triumphs" and interpret other leaders' efforts as feckless and ill-conceived.

¶12. (C/NF) His still-strong support in Lebanon's Maronite community (albeit less than when he arrived at Beirut International last May and told his crowd of avid supporters to "shut up") makes him a political force that could materially assist in the pro-reform effort to achieve a stable, democratic state. But his resolute refusal to see

Hizballah for what it is -- and his dismissive criticism of any other political leader -- has placed him in political limbo from which he stubbornly resists every opportunity to escape.

¶13. (C/NF) We have noticed developing fissures in the FPM movement and strong disagreement with Aoun's policies in his second-tier of advisors, but Aoun's lack of movement toward the country's other pro-reform leaders implies that the post-conflict political scene may be as contentious as it was on July 11. We agree with him that the Shia community in Lebanon cannot be ignored and cannot be made to feel defeat as a community. But, unlike Jumblatt and Hariri, Aoun has not yet awakened to the fact that Nasrallah has used him.
End comment.
FELTMAN